

Skip the Queue

Playbook #1



The retail ready guide
to going beyond the
gift shop.

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Introduction.

Congratulations

You've taken the first step in starting (or refreshing) your eCommerce business.

For museums, cultural destinations and attractions, online retail is no longer just a nice-to-have, it's an essential part of the visitor experience and a powerful driver of revenue. Too often, eCommerce is treated as an afterthought, leaving untapped retail potential on the table.

This playbook is here to change that. Inside, you'll find practical insights from industry experts, real-life case studies and proven strategies from one of the UK's top-performing museum gift shops.

Whether you're just getting started or looking to take your online store to the next level, you'll discover how to:

- Unlock new revenue streams
- Strengthen your brand
- Extend the visitor journey well beyond the physical doors of your attraction

Let's dive in...



Section 1:

Knowing what guests want to buy.

Curated by:

**STEPHEN
SPENCER
+ASSOCIATES**

Knowing what guests want to buy.



Stephen Spencer

Ambience Director



Catrina Hicks

Commercial retail specialist



Carly Straughan

Tourism, ticketing and technology consultant

Curated by:

**STEPHEN
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Before you can build a successful online shop, you need clarity on exactly what you're offering, who it's for, and how it connects to your wider mission as a business. Developing your concept is about far more than stocking shelves, it's about defining your brand story, understanding your audience and shaping an experience that feels authentic and compelling.

With the right framework, every decision from product selection to fulfilment can be guided by your brand values and your customers' expectations.

That's where Stephen Spencer + Associates' **STARS** model comes in.

STARS is a model of a world-class customer experience. It identifies the five elements that must be kept in balance, and offers a practical way to make sure your online shop is not just a transaction point, but an extension of your brand.

Reach for the STARS.

Section 1



Shoppers increasingly want purchases with meaning, cultural consumers in particular value authenticity, they want to know why a product exists, not just what it is.



Pro Tip.



1. Story

This is the essence of what your audiences value about you and expect to find when they engage with your organisation. Online retail should be a natural continuation of that story. For a museum, that might mean items inspired by the collection. For an attraction, it could be playful gifts that capture the spirit of a day out. Anchoring your product selection in your story helps you stand out in a crowded market and builds trust.

2. Team

Your people are your brand in action. Every customer touchpoint, from browsing online to receiving an order, should feel consistent with your values. That means ensuring staff or outsourced partners handling fulfilment and customer service understand and live your brand promise.

Think of customer service as a brand experience, not an afterthought. A cheerful thank-you note or a quick response to an enquiry reinforces trust just as much as a well-designed website.

3. Ambience

Online, ambience comes down to how your site feels. While you're limited to sight and (sometimes) sound, don't underestimate the "moment of truth" when an order arrives.

Packaging, unboxing and even the materials used are all part of the sensory encounter. These details turn a simple purchase into a memorable brand experience.



Pro Tip.

Unboxing videos are a cultural phenomenon. Consumers now expect care, creativity, and even delight in how products are packaged and delivered.

Never assume you know what customers want. Test your ideas, ask them directly, and adapt.



Pro Tip.

4. Recipients

It may sound obvious, but the customer is at the centre of everything. The more you know about your audiences, the better you can design products and experiences they'll actually buy. Go beyond demographics and build personas that capture motivations, behaviours and emotional drivers.

5. Sustainability

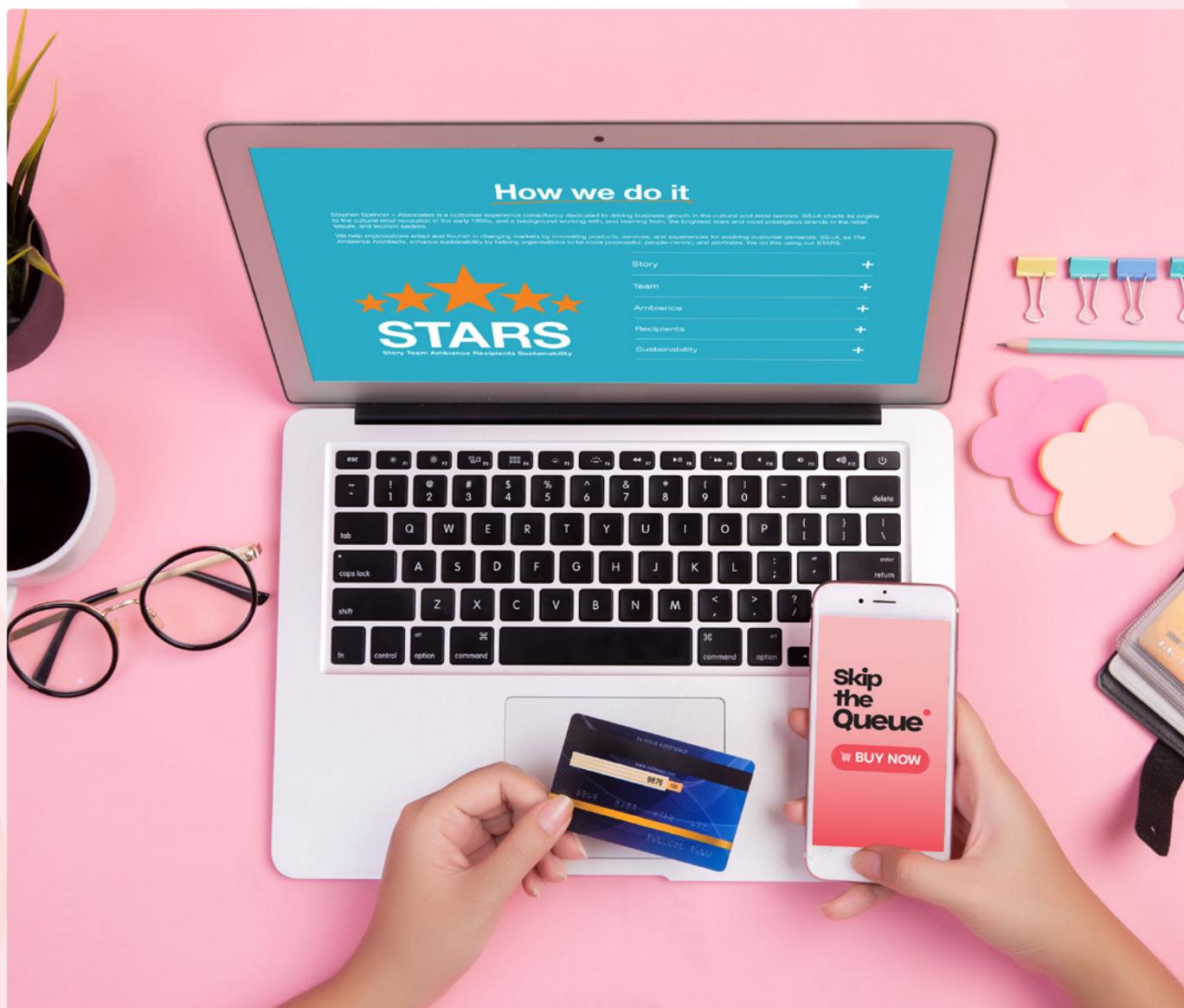
Sustainability is about more than environmental credentials. It's about long-term commercial resilience. For online shops, that means building systems that reduce costs, diversify revenue streams and keep your offer relevant to future audiences.

Today's customers, especially younger ones, expect sustainability to be visible, not hidden in the small print. Clear messaging around ethical sourcing, recyclable packaging, or supporting conservation projects can strengthen loyalty and justify premium pricing.

When the STARS align.

The STARS model reminds us that a great online shop doesn't happen by accident. It's a careful balance of story, people, design, audience insight and long-term sustainability. Start by aligning these five elements, and you'll build more than just an ecommerce platform, you'll create a brand experience that resonates with guests, generates revenue and reflects the values of your organisation.

Whenever you make a decision whether about a new product, a fulfilment partner, or a packaging change, run it through the STARS lens. If it strengthens your story, empowers your team, creates ambience, meets audience needs and sustains your future, you're on the right track.



Section 2:

Taking your physical brand online.

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Catrina Hicks
Commercial retail specialist



Once you've defined your story, your audience and the values guiding your retail offer, the next step is to translate that into a digital experience that feels every bit as engaging as visiting in person.

Think of it this way: your online shop should feel like walking into your physical store... only better.

It's a chance to extend your brand beyond your walls, keep the relationship alive after the visit and invite new customers into your world. The challenge is making sure the digital version has the same clarity, care and personality as the physical one.

1. HERO pieces: Anchor your range.



HERO pieces

Every great shop starts with stand-out products, your “HERO” pieces. These could be inspired by a star object in your collection, an exhibition highlight, or even an iconic part of your brand identity.



Pro Tip.

Build around your hero items. Turn a limited-edition print into tote bags, postcards, or books to expand the story and boost sales.

Shoppers crave exclusivity. Limited runs and members only items build hype and loyalty.

Pro Tip.

Centre stage

On your website, hero products deserve centre stage. Feature them on a visually striking landing page, photographed beautifully and described with evocative, appealing language. Words like exclusive, limited edition, special, or fun signal value and urgency, but only if they’re authentic.

2. Navigation: make it easy to shop.



Think of your homepage as your shop window and your menu as your shop floor plan. If a visitor can't find what they want within two clicks, they're likely to leave.



Pro Tip.

Keep it simple

Your physical shop is carefully laid out so visitors can find what they need and discover what they didn't know they wanted. Online should be no different.

Keep your navigation simple, logical and brand-led. Group products into clear categories or collections whether that's by exhibition, theme or type (books, homeware, children's). Make the search bar central, large and easy to use.

Clean user experience

Product pages should be clean and uncluttered, with strong photography, straightforward descriptions and easy-to-select options (like size or colour).



Pro Tip.

Mobile-first browsing is dominant, with over 60% of ecommerce traffic now coming from smartphones. Designing for mobile navigation is essential.

3. Sales maximisation.

Add to basket

The fewer clicks between product and checkout, the better. A smooth, intuitive checkout process reduces drop-offs and builds confidence.

At checkout, show clear product details including an image, size, colour and price. This reassures customers they've chosen correctly. Add basket building tools such as "You may also like" or "Complete the look".

These suggestions mirror in-person upselling and can significantly lift average order value.

Don't overlook abandoned basket recovery. A gentle reminder "Still thinking about this?" or a small incentive can convert a large share of otherwise lost sales.



Pro Tip.

Research shows that abandoned basket emails consistently drive double-digit conversion rates. If ASOS and Amazon rely on them, so should attractions.

4. Customer service.

Service and sales

Your ecommerce shop is as much about service as sales. Swift, helpful responses to enquiries build trust and encourage repeat custom.

If phone support isn't possible, an online chat function is far better than requiring customers to send an email and wait.

Returns and exchange policies should be clear, simple and fair, anything complicated creates hesitation at the point of purchase.

5. Maintenance.

"Taking your physical brand online is about recreating the same care, detail and storytelling that make your in-person experiences so powerful."

Keep it fresh

A neglected online shop quickly feels stale. Keep your shop refreshed by regularly adding new products, re-sorting ranges, and telling fresh stories tied to themes, events or exhibitions.

Even small updates, like rotating featured products or changing homepage photography, can create a sense of newness that encourages repeat visits.

Taking your physical brand online is about recreating the same care, detail and storytelling that make your in-person experiences so powerful.

HERO products catch attention, navigation makes the journey seamless, sales tools maximise value, customer service builds trust and maintenance keeps the momentum alive.

Think of it as running a second shop without closing hours, geographical limits, or physical queues. When you invest in making it engaging, intuitive, and brand-led, it becomes more than just a shop. It becomes part of your visitor experience.

Section 3:

Finding the right software for you.

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+ASSOCIATES**

What sits under the hood?

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**STEPHEN
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Carly Straughan

Tourism, ticketing and
technology consultant



"The right system isn't just one that works today, it's one that grows with you tomorrow."

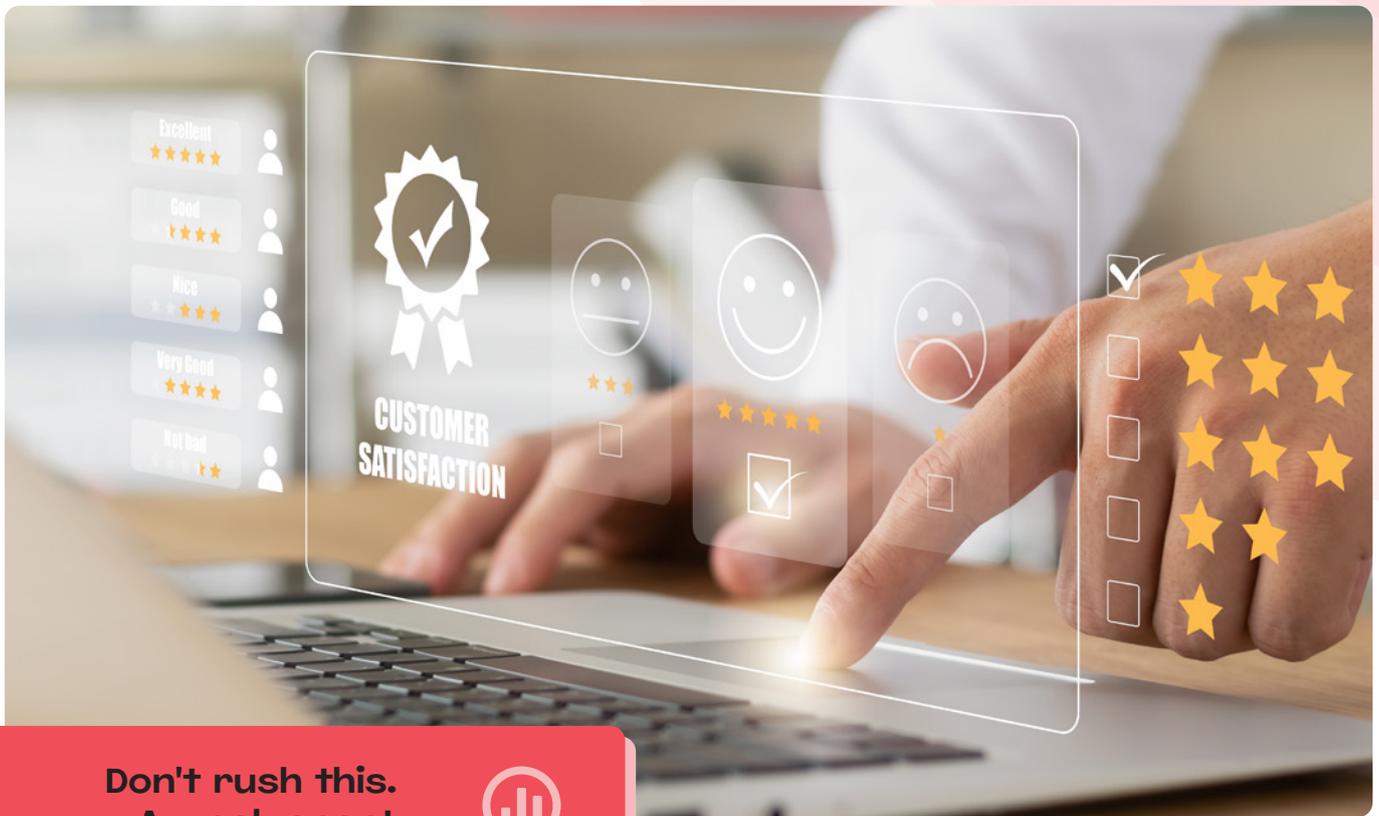
~ **Carly Straughan**

By now, you know what your guests want to buy and how to bring your brand to life online. The next question is: what sits under the hood?

Your online shop is only as strong as the systems that power it. A beautiful front end with poor functionality is like a stunning shop floor where the tills don't work.

This is where technical specification comes in: understanding what your organisation needs, capturing those requirements clearly and finding the right software to deliver.

1. Gather the big picture.



Don't rush this.
A week spent gathering insights here can save months of frustration with the wrong system.



Pro Tip.

Before diving into features and platforms, start with people. Everyone who uses your current system from retail staff to finance, marketing and IT should have the chance to give feedback. What works well? What frustrates them? What would they love to see in the future?

If you have a large team, combine methods: run workshops for core users and send questionnaires for wider feedback. At this stage, you're looking for high-level needs, not technical jargon.

Also consider your different types of customers. Beyond the obvious retail shoppers, you may have:

- Bulk buyers (e.g. schools or resellers)
- Internal customers (e.g. marketing partners or staff)
- Online browsers from overseas

Understanding these groups now prevents gaps later.

2. Map the customer journeys.



Once you know your customer types, plot out what their buying journey looks like. This isn't about tech yet, it's about people and behaviour.

Imagine a customer searching "London tourist attraction tea towel":

- They find your shop via Google
- They browse using your internal search
- They add a tea towel to the basket
- They're shown "You may also like..." and add another product
- They type their email but abandon the basket
- An email reminder nudges them back
- They complete the order and receive confirmation

This "post-it note" style mapping shows where systems need to support customers. It also creates a simple, shared picture that non-technical staff can engage with.



Pro Tip.

Journey mapping isn't just useful for ecommerce. Leading attractions are using it across ticketing, membership and donations to unify the digital experience.

3. Write a brief.

Now it's time to turn insights into a clear specification. This brief is your foundation when approaching suppliers.

It should include two parts:

- **Technical requirements:** the specific actions your system must deliver (e.g. abandoned basket emails, Google product listings, add-on sales prompts). Prioritise these as must-have, should-have and nice-to-have.
- **Project overview:** the bigger picture e.g. why you're replacing your system, what your goals are, your timeline and key context (e.g. visitor numbers, sales volumes, revenue goals).

This mix of detail and vision ensures suppliers understand both the "what" and the "why."

4. Identify suppliers.

Armed with your brief, it's time to explore the market. Start by:

- Asking peers in your network for recommendations.
- Reviewing industry supplier directories.
- Sharing your brief on your own channels to invite interest.

The goal isn't to find as many suppliers as possible, but to build a shortlist of those who truly fit your needs.



Pro Tip.

A well-written brief helps you, not just your supplier. It keeps everyone aligned and reduces the risk of costly surprises later.

5. Shortlist and decide.

Now compare options. You can run a formal tender (where suppliers respond to each requirement for scoring) or work more conversationally, exploring how each supplier would address your needs.

Keep coming back to your original aims:

- Does this system solve the frustrations your team identified?
- Does it support the journeys you mapped?
- Does it fit your budget and timeline?

Once you're confident, confirm pricing, agree project details, and get moving. Change is always challenging, but with the right preparation, you'll step into it knowing you've made an informed, future-proof decision.

Your ecommerce platform isn't just a piece of software but the foundation of your digital retail strategy. Taking time to gather insights, map journeys and write a clear brief will save you from costly mistakes and ensure your system is built to last. With the right technical engine in place, you can deliver the seamless, brand-led experience you've dreamed of and unlock the potential of online retail for the long term.

Section 4:

Building your online retail engine.

Curated by:



Building your online retail engine.



Paul Marden
CEO



Sinead Kimberley
General Manager

Curated by:



Your online shop isn't just a revenue stream, it's part of your visitor experience. Make it count.



Pro Tip.



After you've clarified what your guests want, brought your brand online and chosen the right systems to support them, it's time to assemble the engine that powers your digital retail. Think of it as moving from blueprint to running machinery, your technical specification is the foundation, and now you're building the infrastructure that turns insight into action.

This section focuses on putting all the pieces together, from inventory and fulfillment to analytics and marketing, so that your online shop not only functions but thrives. With the right engine, every part of your online operation works in harmony to deliver the seamless, brand-led experience you've mapped out and the results your organisation needs.

With over 20 years of experience, Rubber Cheese has been building websites that work beautifully for both visitors and venues. They understand that your digital presence isn't just a shop window; it's a revenue driver, a brand ambassador and a guest experience in its own right.

Rubber Cheese has curated a five-step process to help you create an online shop that drives revenue, engages visitors, and reflects the unique personality of your brand.

Building your online retail engine.



1. Start with the right platform

When it comes to setting up your online gift shop, we recommend Shopify. Here's our take:

- **Speed:** Shopify is quick to set up and easy to use. You don't need a tech degree to manage it.
- **Performance:** It's fast-loading and secure, two things that will make both your guests and Google happy.
- **Plugins galore:** From discount tools to postage calculators, there's an app for nearly everything.

- **Expectations met:** It looks and feels like the online stores your customers already know. Familiarity = trust.

According to the latest Rubber Cheese Website Survey, 40% of smaller and mid-sized attractions use Shopify as their platform of choice.



40% of venues use spotify as their website of choice.

Pro Tip.



2. Don't oversell what you don't have

Integrate with your stock system.

An ecommerce site that doesn't sync with your on-site inventory is asking for trouble. Real-time stock integration brings:

- **Accuracy:** If it's out of stock in your shop, it's out of stock online. No disappointed customers.

- **Efficiency:** Automates fulfilment and reduces admin. No double handling.
- **Speed:** Orders go straight into your fulfilment process. Quick turnaround = happy guests.

Put simply, stock integration makes your team's life easier and your customers' experience better.

Building your online retail engine.



3. Focus on conversion

Design for UX, especially on mobile.

Great design isn't just about looking good, it's about making the path to purchase ridiculously simple.

Our top tips:

- Keep the checkout short. Every extra step adds risk of drop-off. Aim for no more than 2 -3 clicks to complete a purchase.
- Use clear calls to action. Make it obvious where to click, tap or swipe.
- Add a progress bar. People are more likely to complete checkout if they know how far they've got to go.

- Optimise for mobile. 80% of traffic to attraction websites now comes from mobile devices. Design for thumbs, not mouse pointers.

Removing just one step from the checkout process could earn the average attraction an extra £8,000 a year and up to £225,000 for top performers.



Pro Tip.

Removing just one step from the checkout process could earn the average attraction an extra £8,000 a year.

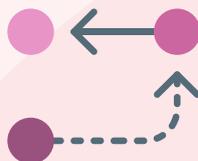
4. Join the dots

Integrate ecommerce with ticketing and other systems.

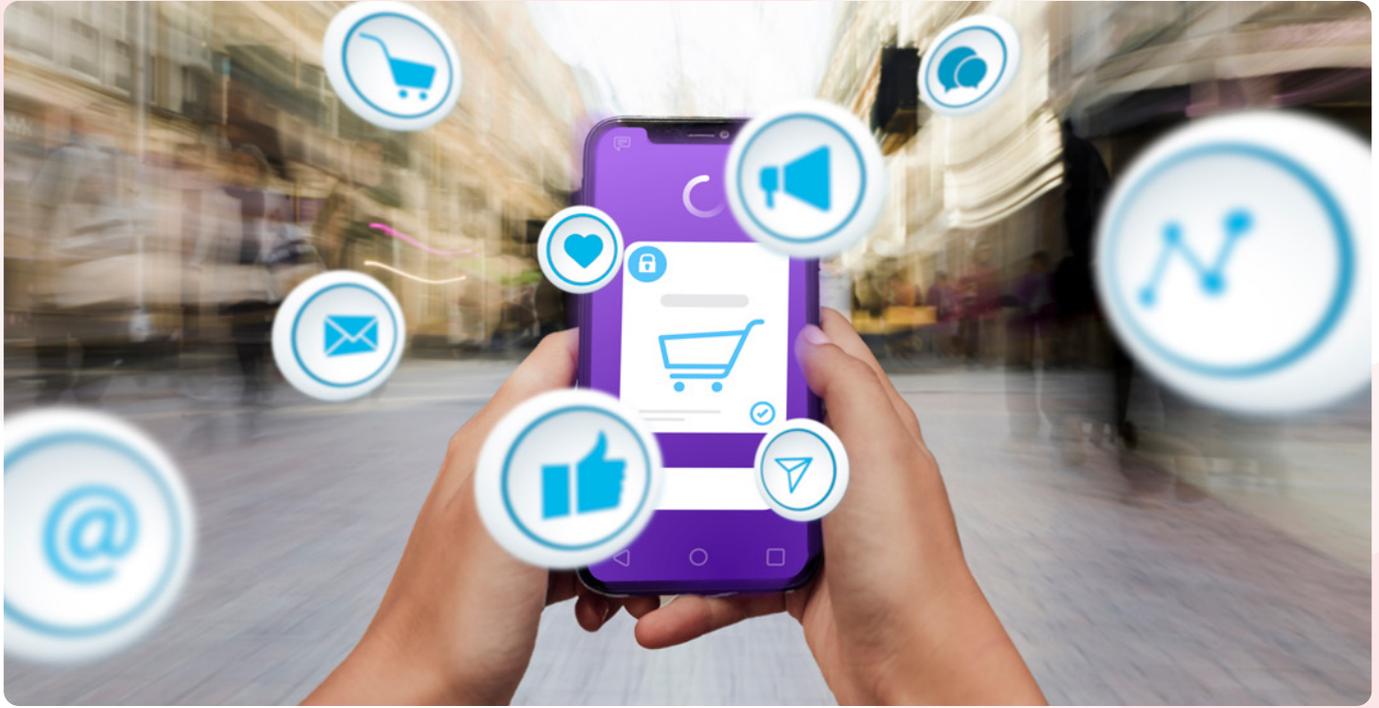
Ecommerce shouldn't be an island. By connecting your gift shop with your ticketing platform, you create a frictionless journey that feels smart and personal:

- Avoid duplicated data entry
- Deliver unified reporting
- Create upsell opportunities throughout the booking journey

You already know what your guests are coming for. Use that insight to personalise their online experience and nudge them towards the perfect extras.



Building your online retail engine.



5. Ask for more

The industry isn't demanding enough and that's a problem.

Many visitor attractions still settle for clunky, outdated ecommerce systems because "that's just how it is." It doesn't have to be. You're competing with slick online retail experiences every day.

Your ecommerce should:

- Be fast
- Be mobile-optimised
- Integrate fully with your ticketing and POS
- Offer personalisation options
- Be a pleasure to use

Expect more from your digital tools because your guests already do.



Section 5:

Getting guests to click 'buy'.

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navigate

Getting guests to click 'buy'.



Ollly Reed

Marketing Director



Howard Phillis

Head of Paid Media

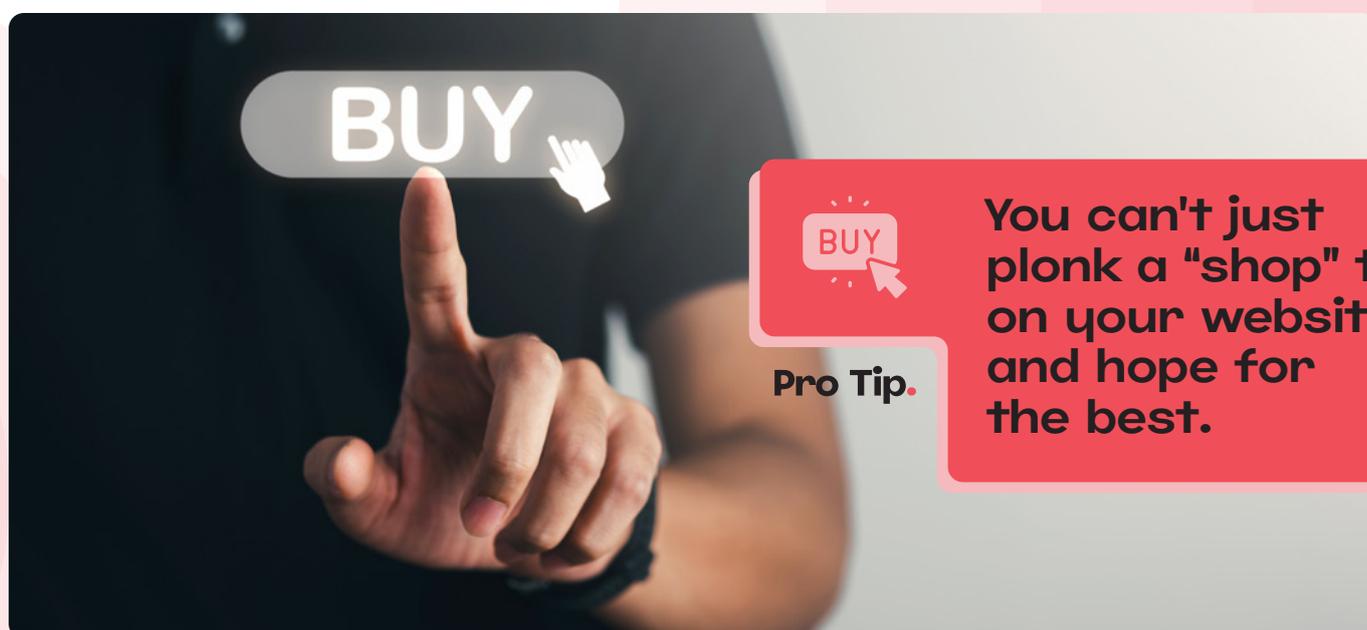


Shannon D'Arcy

Senior Project Manager

Curated by:

navigate



With your online retail engine in place, the next step is turning interest into action. It's one thing to have a seamless platform and operational systems, it's another to create an experience that motivates guests to click "Buy."

In this section, we draw on insights from Navigate to explore the strategies, trends, and behavioral triggers that guide guests from consideration to purchase.

Understanding what drives guests to complete a purchase is key. It's about reducing friction, highlighting value, and creating a sense of confidence in every step of the journey.

From product presentation to checkout flow, each element should feel intuitive and purposeful, aligning with how guests naturally make buying decisions.

Navigate's research shows that small adjustments in messaging, layout, and engagement can significantly increase conversion rates, turning your online store from a functional presence into a fully optimised sales engine. This section highlights practical tactics that work in real-world retail environments, making it clear how to move guests from browsing to buying with ease.

Driving the right traffic.

Paid search is precision; social is discovery. The smart move is to know which is right for you and when.



Pro Tip.

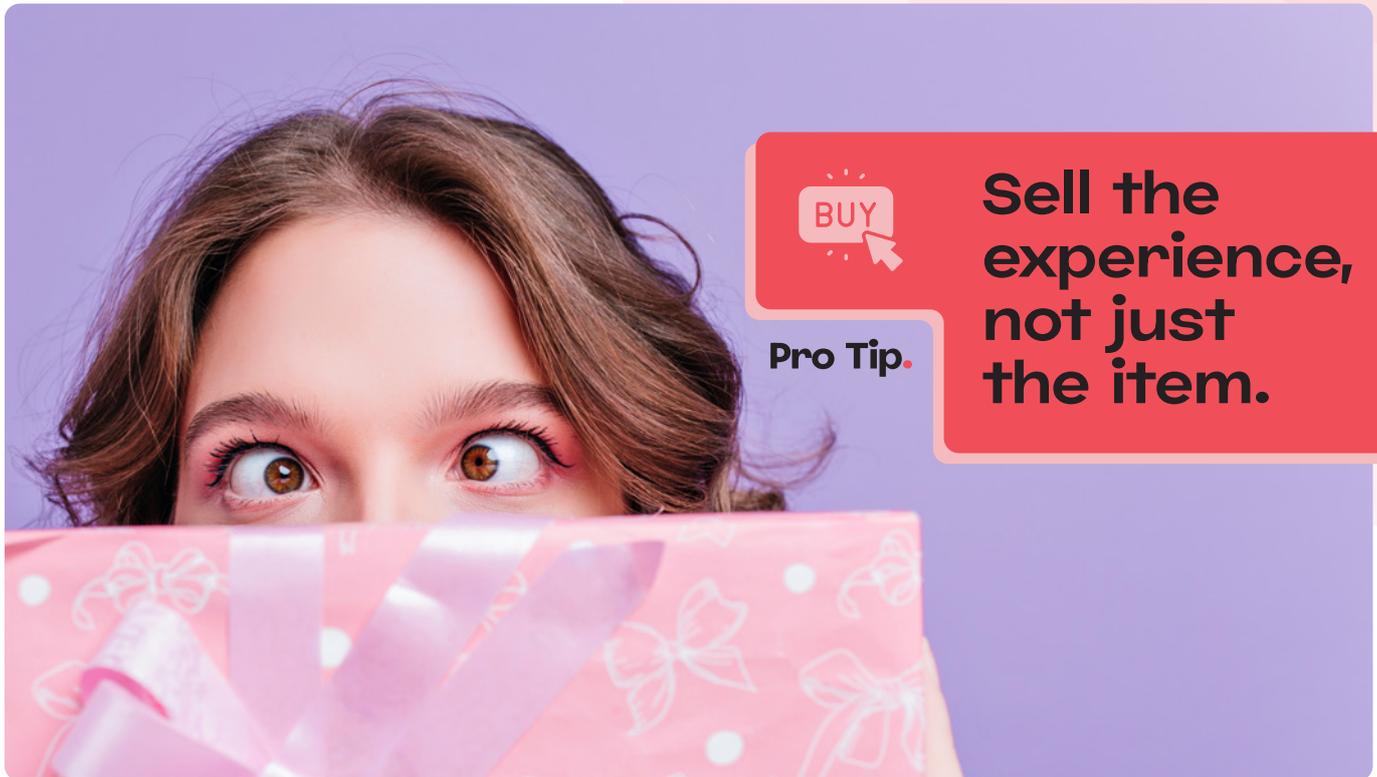
Nobody buys from an empty shop. The question isn't just "how do we get traffic?" it's "how do we get the right traffic?" Take two examples: a maritime heritage attraction versus a farm park. The maritime shop has a niche audience of naval history enthusiasts so paid search works best, capturing people actively looking for "nautical gifts" or "model ships." They know what they want; they just need to find you.

A farm park, on the other hand, has a broader, family-friendly range: cuddly toys, activity books and games. Here, organic and social content drive discovery. A video of a toddler enjoying a new plush giraffe can do far more than a product page alone.

Both strategies work but they're different. Paid search is precision; social is discovery. The key is knowing which to use, and when. Ecommerce for attractions isn't a year-round sprint; it's seasonal. Father's Day, Mother's Day, Christmas, Valentine's, Black Friday, these are your peak "high streets." Keep a low-level always-on presence, but plan your budget around moments that matter. And don't overlook Boxing Day, less crowded, yet often hugely profitable.

You don't need a massive budget to succeed. The real trick is making every pound you spend work harder, not just spending more.

First-timers Vs. Familiar faces.



Your online shop has two types of visitors: those who already know you, and those who don't. Treat them differently.

For people who've visited before, remarketing is your secret weapon. They've seen the ship, the tiger, the dinosaur. They've walked through your shop, maybe picked something up, maybe put it back down. A well-placed ad saying "Still thinking about that?" can tip them over. Think of it as the gentle tap on the shoulder at the till.

Your till, or more precisely, the sales data it holds, is full of clues. Every purchase tells you something about the people who love what you do, and those clues can be used to find more like them. Paid media platforms enable the creation of lookalike audiences, allowing you to target new customers who share the same traits and interests as your existing buyers.

For people who've never set foot in your attraction, it's all about making the shop feel like a destination in itself. That means lifestyle photography, not catalogue shots. Show the tote bag in use, the mug steaming on a desk, the soft toy being hugged. Sell the experience, not just the item.

This is where many attractions stumble. Product photos on a white background? Forget it. That works for Amazon, but you're not Amazon. You're selling memory, story, and place. Your advantage is context. Use it.

Organic momentum: content that sells.



Paid ads create spikes. Organic content builds the foundation. The most effective tactic we've seen? Gift guides and listicles.

"Top five Father's Day gifts for history buffs."

"Perfect stocking fillers for under £20."

"Three presents Jane Austen fans will swoon over."

People love lists. Google loves lists. You should love lists too. They're cheap to produce, endlessly repurposeable, and surprisingly evergreen. Pair them with social storytelling. A curator showing off their favourite book.

A volunteer laughing with a plush toy. A behind the scenes glimpse at a new product arriving in stock. These posts don't just show the item, they show the human connection.



Pro Tip.

People love lists. Google loves lists. You should love lists too.

Partners in the mix.



Your digital shop doesn't have to find its audience alone. Partnerships can carry you further and faster, because they place your products in front of people who are already looking. Hotels, local tourism boards and destination marketers are natural allies, they're all in the business of attracting visitors and keeping destinations relevant. A cross-promotion with a boutique hotel, or a spot in a tourism board's seasonal campaign, can drop your online shop into the right inbox or Instagram feed at exactly the right moment. It weaves your shop into the bigger story of place, travel, and community.

Influencers work in the same way, niche creators can do some of your heavy lifting online. A family blogger showing a rainy-day activity kit, a historian walking through your replica maps, or an eco-advocate praising your recycled tote. These are tiny digital shopfronts scattered across the internet, each one leading back to you.

Email: Subtle but strategic.



Pro Tip

..abandoned basket emails. They work. They work for ASOS, and they'll work for you.

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Following the footsteps: Tracking journeys.

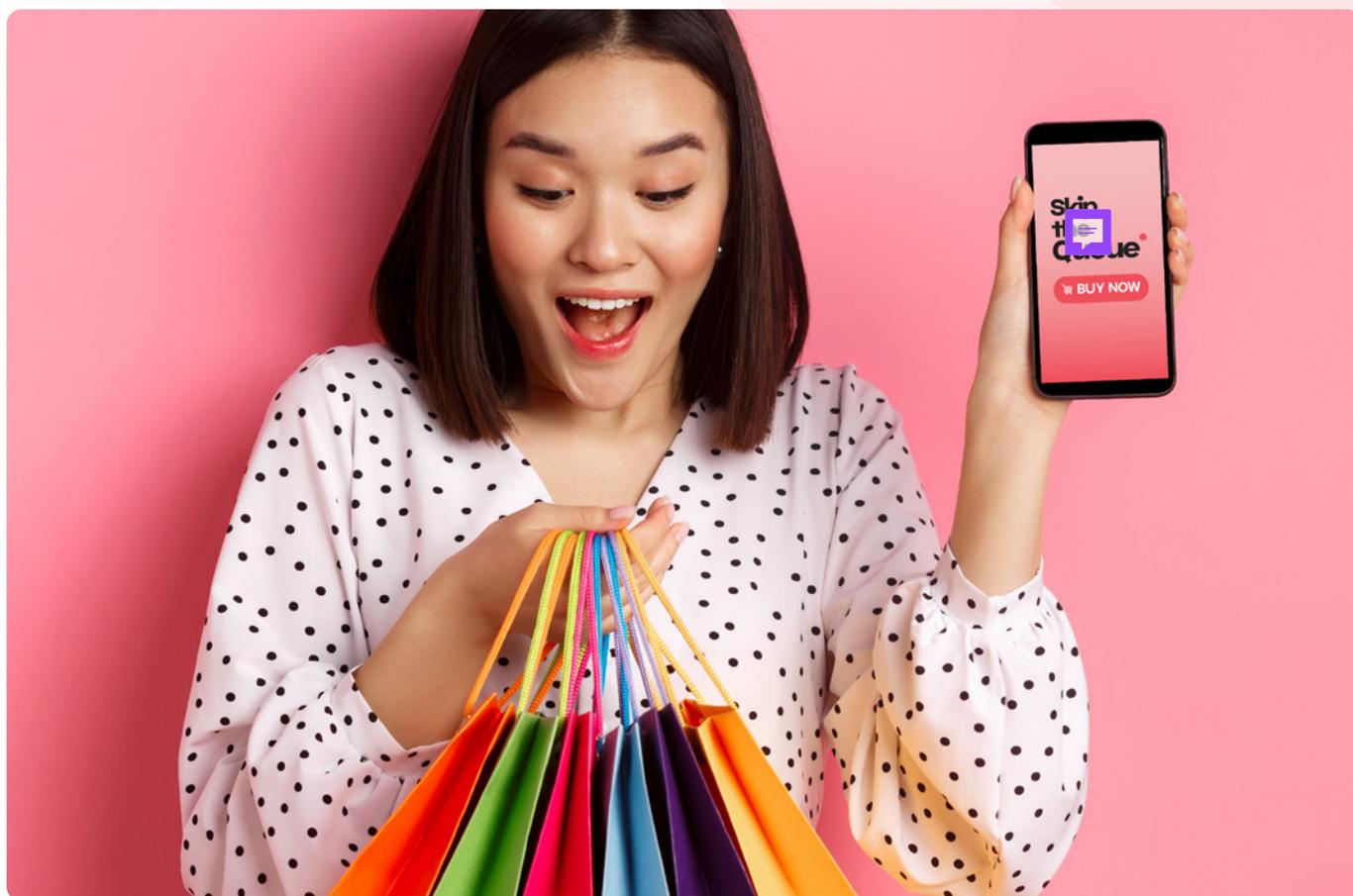


In your physical shop, you can see behaviour. Someone wanders, picks something up, puts it down, leaves. Online, you need data to see the same. Funnel tracking is your CCTV.

Set up analytics to see where people add to the basket, where they hesitate, and where they abandon. It doesn't need to be daily. Once a quarter is fine for most attractions. What you'll often find are simple blockers: postage that costs more than the product, a clunky payment page, or a missing PayPal or Apple Pay option. Fix those, and your conversion rate jumps.

And don't stop at retail. Ticketing can learn from eCommerce too. Abandoned cart emails, free delivery thresholds (or "free kids ticket with every three adults"), upsell bundles, these tactics work across the board. If you're not borrowing from eCommerce playbooks for your admissions, you're leaving money on the table.

Future channels: Where the guests already are.



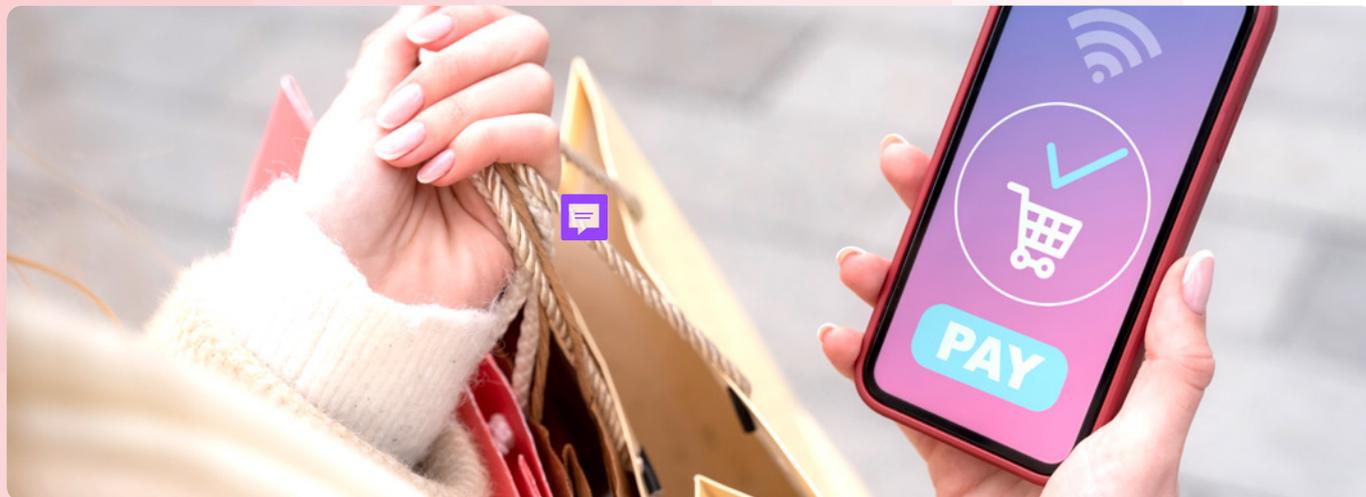
The web is no longer the only shopfront. TikTok Shop, Instagram Shop, livestream retail, these aren't niche anymore, they're mainstream. Picture this: you're livestreaming in front of the shark tank, showcasing toys, with a "buy now" button a click away. No funnel, no faff, just storytelling meets impulse. It's QVC for Gen Z, and it's already huge. If your team is stretched, starting here can actually be easier than building a full ecommerce site. Test demand. See what resonates. Then scale up. The rule is simple: sell where people already spend their time. If they're on TikTok, meet them there.



Pro Tip.

The rule is simple: sell where people already spend their time. If they're on TikTok, meet them there.

Making it work in the real world.



A final dose of realism. eCommerce will never eclipse admissions revenue. A sold-out Halloween trail or Christmas light event will always outperform the shop. But that doesn't make online retail a side-show. Done well, it can be three things at once:

- An extra stream of income, especially during gifting peaks.
- A brand-builder that keeps you present in people's lives after they leave.
- A way of turning "exit through the gift shop" into "return to the gift shop, anytime."

The key is to play to your strengths. Sell what's unique to you. Nobody needs another generic stuffed toy. They want the one that reminds them of the day they fed the giraffe, saw the ship or walked the trail. That's what Amazon can't do.

Pair that uniqueness with sharp storytelling, smart seasonal campaigns and a little creativity, and you'll have a shop that doesn't just exist, it performs.

Because in the end, guests don't just stumble into your online shop. You bring them there. And if you make it discoverable, relevant and enjoyable, they'll click 'buy'.

eCommerce isn't about throwing a "shop" link on your website and hoping for the best. It's about creating a digital experience that feels as considered, welcoming and memorable as the physical one. When done well, it can deliver three things at once: a reliable stream of revenue, a powerful brand touchpoint that keeps you in people's lives, and a reason for guests to come back, even after they've walked out the door.

The key is focus. Sell what's unique to you. Pair it with sharp storytelling, seasonal campaigns, and the right marketing mix. Keep testing, keep learning, and remember: guests don't stumble into your shop, you bring them there. If you make it discoverable, relevant, and easy to use, they won't just browse. They'll buy.



Pro Tip.

The key is to play to your strengths. Sell what's unique to you.

Section 6:

Tried & Tested.

Case study: The Tank Museum.

"We realised our audience was already global, we just weren't giving them a way to support us beyond a visit."

Nik Wyness
Head of Marketing
The Tank Museum



SHOP NOW

HOMEWARE

SHOP NOW



THE TANK MUSEUM SHOP



Presents The Tank

(16)

IP

ADD TO CART



Limited Edition Running Tigers Art Print: 3 for £30

£30.00 GBP

ADD TO CART



Exclusive Tanks of the World Book Safe

★★★★★ (1)

£29.99 GBP

ADD TO CART

Pre-order now



PRE-ORDER: The Tank Museum Guide to Rolls-Royce Armoured Car

£20.00 GBP

PRE-ORDER NOW



Tiger 131 Brown Leather Wall

★★★★★ (2)

£12.99 GBP

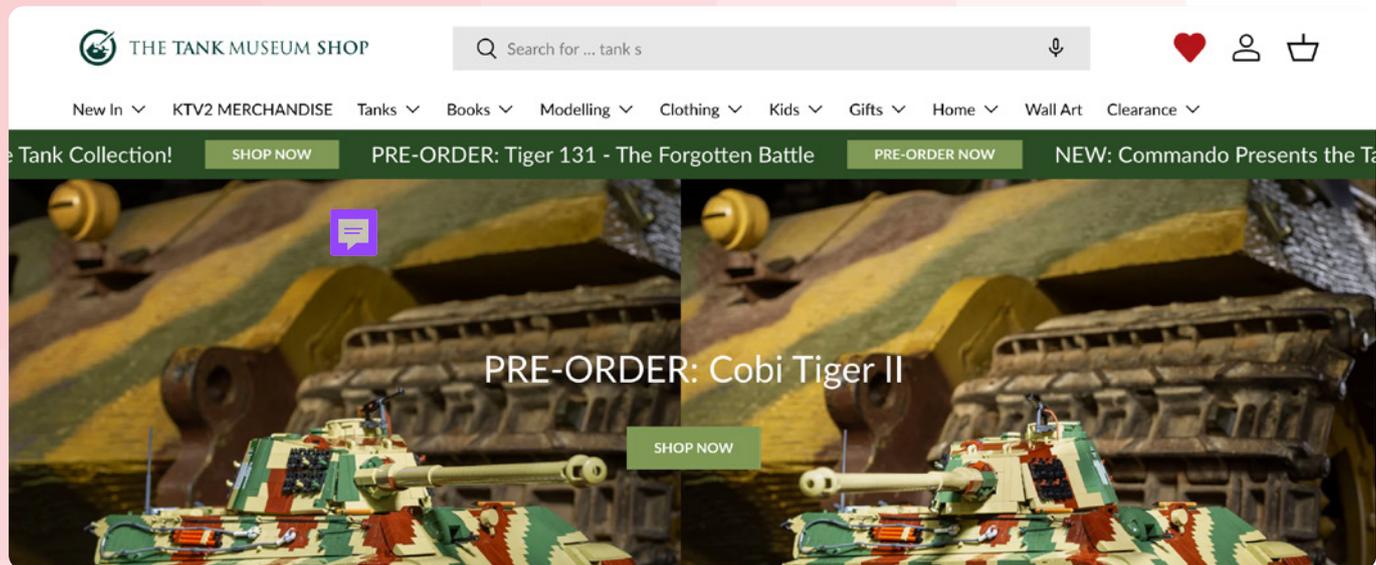
ADD TO CART

When it comes to attraction retail, The Tank Museum is often held up as the benchmark and for good reason. With one of the UK's top-performing museum gift shops, they've proven that going digital isn't just possible for heritage sites, it can be transformative.

Based in Bovington, Dorset The Tank Museum is home to the world's finest collection of tanks and armoured vehicles, telling the story of armoured warfare from World War I to the present day. With a global audience of enthusiasts, researchers and visitors alike, the museum has always aimed to balance its physical visitor experience with digital reach.

Recognising that their on-site shop was already a strong revenue stream, The Tank Museum made the strategic decision to expand online. The result? A shop that isn't just an add-on, but a powerhouse in its own right. Online sales now account for a significant percentage of the museum's retail revenue, extending the reach of the brand to audiences worldwide and proving that heritage attractions can thrive in ecommerce when they apply the right strategy.

Why they chose to go digital.



The team recognised that their audience was already international with YouTube views, social followers, and overseas visitors proving there was appetite well beyond Dorset. But their online shop didn't reflect that potential. They invested in building a robust online shop that reflected both the museum's identity and the needs of its customers.

They focused on creating a seamless shopping experience, integrating storytelling and personalised marketing. Their digital strategy combined strong visual content with a streamlined e-commerce platform, ensuring visitors felt as engaged online as they did on-site.

The outcome.

The results were transformational. Online sales grew significantly, providing a crucial new income stream during lockdown and beyond. The shop reaches customers across the world, giving the museum an international footprint that strengthens its brand, boosts revenue, and creates a loyal base of global supporters. Listen to the full Skip the Queue episode (QR code)

Listen here:

skipthequeue.fm/episodes/nik-wyness

"Don't see digital as secondary, it can be your strongest tool for growth."

Nik Wyness

Head of Marketing, The Tank Museum

Section 7:

**The data speaks:
What the sector says.**

The data speaks: What the sector says.

As we've explored how to get guests to click 'buy,' it's critical to step back and see what the data tells us about the broader sector. By understanding trends, gaps, and emerging behaviors, you can benchmark your own strategy and identify high-impact opportunities.

Every year, the Visitor Attractions Website Survey provides a snapshot of how attractions are evolving online. The 2025 results highlight both encouraging progress and surprising gaps that many attractions still need to address to thrive in the digital space.

eCommerce adoption remains patchy. Despite the growing importance of online retail, XX% of attractions still don't offer any online sales options. This represents untapped revenue and limits engagement beyond the on-site experience. The takeaway? Offering online retail is no longer optional, it's vital.

Speed matters more than ever. Survey data confirms that attractions with faster average page load times consistently achieve higher conversion rates. Even a few extra seconds can lead to abandoned sessions and lost sales. This underscores the importance of investing in website performance and technical optimisation.

Personalisation is underused. Cart abandonment continues to challenge the sector, yet attractions using tailored recommendations, dynamic content, or personalised messaging see XX% better retention and repeat purchase rates. Small personal touches can have an outsized impact on guest satisfaction and revenue.

Mobile is now the dominant channel. XX% of users access attraction websites via smartphones. Yet, many sites still aren't fully optimised for mobile-first journeys, which can lead to missed opportunities to convert casual browsers into paying visitors. A mobile-first mindset, combined with speed and personalisation, creates the foundation for a seamless guest experience.

Sustainability is becoming a digital benchmark. Visitors increasingly expect attractions to communicate their environmental commitments online. While more attractions are highlighting eco-credentials, the survey shows a gap between visitor expectations and current presentation. Clear, engaging messaging around sustainability not only builds trust but can also strengthen connection with environmentally conscious audiences.

This data isn't just numbers, but a roadmap. Speed, personalisation, mobile optimisation and sustainability are no longer optional features but must-haves for converting online interest into real engagement and revenue. By aligning your strategy with sector trends, you can move from simply keeping pace to leading the field in digital guest experiences.

[Read the full 2025 Visitor Attractions Website Survey Report for full industry insights.](#)

Conclusion.

Online retail is no longer an afterthought. It's a way to:

- Generate new revenue
- Extend guest satisfaction
- Keep your brand alive long after the visit

Now's the time to assess your current setup.

Where are the gaps? Which section of this playbook resonates with where you are right now?

Speak to the experts featured here, explore the case studies, and take the next step in making your shop retail-ready. Because the gift shop is no longer the end of the journey. It's the beginning of a lasting relationship with your visitors.

Get in touch with our experts.

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Skip The Queue is the podcast for visitor attraction owners, directors and suppliers who want to improve their organisations and deliver a better experience for their guests.

In every episode, we speak with inspiring industry experts who share their knowledge of what really makes an attraction successful, from operational insights to creative breakthroughs

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